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ABSTRACT

A system to provide objective measures of institutional effectiveness was implemented at the Roswell branch of Eastern New Mexico University to determine whether the college was accountable to students, staff, and taxpayers; to improve the curriculum and programs; and to prepare for accreditation review in 1991. A task force spent the summer of 1988 researching and reviewing various forms of outcomes assessment. The program now consists of the following: entering students take placement tests in reading, English, and mathematics using the "Asset"; students in "College Success," a required course for entering students are given the Critical Thinking test; and after the completion of 45 units, the tests are retaken to obtain a post-test score. In addition, the school began tracking developmental studies students through their college coursework. Results of the testing efforts included the following: (1) in 1989-90, 46% of the entering students passed the math placement test, 49% passed the English placement test, and 59% passed the reading placement test; (2) in 1990-91, when Roswell switched to the "Asset" placement test, only 34% passed the math section, 32% passed the English test, and 35% passed the reading test; and (3) in 1989-90, 96% of the students enrolled in developmental math classes passed, 82% passed developmental English classes, and 83% passed developmental reading, while in 1990-91, pass rates were 88% for math, 73% for English, and 84% for reading. One of the advantages of the Roswell's testing program is that it facilitates comparisons with similar institutions and national norms. (JMC)

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Eastern New Mexico University-Roswell
Department of Developmental Studies

Presentation to North Texas Community College Conference
November 15, 1991

Assessing Skills from Placement to Completion

Judy Armstrong

JC 920 119

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PRESENTATION TO NORTH TEXAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE CONFERENCE
NOVEMBER 15, 1991

1. Motivation to do outcomes assessment:
   A. National reports of poor student performance
   B. Institutional self-improvement
   C. Accountability
   D. CHE, NCA, SDE

2. Background of plan

3. Assessment flow chart

4. Key points of assessment program (1)

5. Placement Test Results (1989-90/1990-91)/Comparison to norms

6. Initial outcome assessment through Developmental Studies Class results (1989-90/1990-91)

7. Developmental Studies Tracking Results

8. Key points of assessment program (2)

9. Critical Thinking Results

10. Key points of assessment program (3)

11. Additional Outcomes assessment
    A. SOCAT results
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12. What happens after testing results are in?

13. Advantages of Assessment program

14. Ultimate assessment (cartoon)

ASSESSING SKILLS FROM PLACEMENT TO COMPLETION
JUDY ARMSTRONG
NOVEMBER 15, 1991

(transparency, Great Year) I am very pleased to be here today. Perhaps the first thing I should do is introduce myself and tell you a little bit about my school. My name is Judy Armstrong, and I am Assistant Dean of Instructional Support at the Roswell branch of Eastern New Mexico University, a position I've held for the past three years. In this position, I oversee a variety of programs. One of my primary responsibilities is to serve as division chair for the Division of Developmental Studies. I also supervise the tutoring program, the College Success and Critical Thinking classes, the Adult Basic Education Program, all of the university's testing programs (GED, placement test, NTE, etc.), the Learning Resource Center, services for the Deaf and Disabled, the Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Program, the Carl Perkins Grant, and the Vocational Training Program for the Developmentally Disabled. As you can see, whenever they don't know exactly where a new program fits, they give it to me. So it was only natural that when the university began its consideration of an outcomes assessment program that I should be the one blessed with implementing it.

A branch of Eastern New Mexico University, which is located in Portales 90 miles northeast of Roswell, ENMU-R began in 1957, with 157 part-time students who met for evening classes at the high school. When a new post office was opened in 1963, the old Federal Building became the college's new home, Roswell's first daytime, coeducational college with 8 classes serving 75 students. The closing of Walker Air Force Base in 1967 created a local crisis, but presented an opportunity for the college, which secured 27 brick buildings and numerous frame buildings situated on 234.5 acres near the center of the former military base, and was able to expand its offerings considerably. In 1982, the voters of our district approved a five-million-dollar bond issue, which was combined with state appropriations to finance a building program which resulted in a beautiful new campus, which was completed in 1989.

Funding for the school is formula driven, based on full-time enrollment. With the oil boom of the early 1980's, the campus was riding high, primarily because of our Oilfield Training Center, one of the few programs of its kind in the nation, which attracted hundreds of full-time students from all over the world. However, the oil decline brought a crisis for the school as well. Enrollment in the OTC dropped to as few as 6 students. Faced with the possibility of having to RIF faculty and staff, the school formed a task force to create an aggressive marketing, recruiting, and retention plan. I am happy to say that plan worked, for this semester we had an all-time high enrollment of 2,074 students, with an FTE of 1,226. Even better, that enrollment was spread throughout the university curriculum, including a large number of academic transfer students as well as many vocational-technical, two-year degree seeking students.

While we are a branch of a university, we function as a community college. Although we share many policies and some curriculum with our mother campus, we also have developed our own internal systems, one of them is outcome measurement. Please feel free to ask questions at any time during my presentation.

1. Motivation:

A. Several things have motivated us to implement a system to objectively measure our institutional effectiveness. All of us have read the national reports indicating poor student performance. Almost every day another headline is screaming at us about how poorly the nation's schools are doing. (transparencies) Our country's two-year institutions have become the "hospitals" if you will for those students whose skills, both personal and academic, are lacking. We have been charged with the task of curing those students and bringing their skills, which they haven't learned in the past 18, 30, or even 50 years, up to snuff in one semester. We have willingly accepted this mission and have done our best to control the epidemic. But have we <u>really</u> done what we set

out to do? Or have we just given our students placebos and sent them on their way to failure in the real world? ENMU-R wanted to know if it was truly being accountable to its students, to their employers, and to the taxpayers.

B. We also entered into an assessment program to help us improve our curriculum and programs. If our students are indeed adding value to their education by attending ENMU-R, that's great. But if they are not making gains during their stay at our school, why aren't they? And what can we do to change our programs, curriculum, support services, or method of instruction to help them to succeed?

C. (motivation transparency) Of course, one of the big motivating forces was the fact that our institution was to be evaluated for continuing accreditation in 1991, and North Central had just required <u>all</u> of its accredited institutions to have an assessment program in place. Now, I don't want to imply that North Central was standing over us with a whip, but their impending visit certainly did speed up the process. As a matter of fact, our dean of the college, Dr. Denis Roark, had been the chairman of the NCA self-study effort during our previous evaluation, and it is because of his foresight that we already had a plan in existence and working when the evaluators came this fall and didn't have to try to design and implement an assessment program as well as do an institutional self-study. By the way, as you might guess, I was the coordinator of the accreditation self-study this year, and I'm pleased to tell you that we got our first-ever 10-year accreditation! Besides North Central, the New Mexico Commission on Higher Education and the New Mexico State Department of Education were also becoming more and more adamant that the state's schools adopt some system of accountability.

2. Background. So, a task force made up of the vocational and academic division chairs, faculty and student representatives, and the Dean of the College spent the summer of 1988 researching and reviewing various forms of outcome assessment

being done. Our first decision as a task force was to utilize a standardized testing instrument to determine a value added measurement of our students' during their first two years at ENMU-R. This would be examined along with other outcome measures--number of graduates, transfers to 4-year institutions, placement, student evaluations and follow-up surveys, evaluations by outside agencies, on-going program review, licensing results for example--to determine institutional and program effectiveness. Once the decision had been made to utilize standardized tests, the committee researched and evaluated various instruments on the market. Because we did not want to test our students more than necessary, we decided to use the ACT CAAP (Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency) as our instrument because it can be correlated with the ACT Asset Placement test designed for two-year institutions. Therefore, by adding only one 50-minute test to the placement testing system that was already in place, we would have baseline scores for virtually all of our academic and vocational students in English, reading, math, and critical thinking. Also, since cost is always a factor, by changing to the Asset placement test, we could initiate our outcome assessment at a minimum expense, rather than testing our students twice on the more costly CAAP. I must also say that after previewing the CAAP, the task force felt that it was too advanced to give to entering freshmen--at least ours. If they were faced with a test at that level of difficulty during the first few weeks of school, they might get so overwhelmed that they would drop out and we wouldn't have anyone to post-test! Another factor affecting our decision to use these instrument is that the main campus had already begun outcome assessment and was using ACT's COMP (College Outcome Measures Program). Although we felt that the COMP was not the appropriate instrument for our purposes, we hope that since they are both ACT instruments some correlation exists. Finally, our provost Dr. Loyd Hughes is concerned with how we are doing as an institution compared to other 2-

year institutions across the country. Therefore, all of our assessment and evaluation instruments, including the faculty student evaluations, are nationally normed, as are the Asset and the CAAP.

3. (Assessment flow chart) So here is the plan we came up with. As you can see, it includes a variety of testing opportunities. First, all entering students are tested on the Asset, and the CAAP Critical Thinking module is administered to almost all freshmen through our College Success classes, which are required for virtually all students during their first semester. Students who have completed 45 credit hours of work within a three-year time-span will post-test on the CAAP reading, writing, mathematics, and critical thinking modules. Vocational students will post-test on the SOCAT, which I will explain later, and nursing and aviation maintenance students will post test on their individual licensing exams. The results, complete with a value added score for academic students, will be shared with the Instructional Council, which is made up of all of the division chairs, and other appropriate university individuals and groups for review.

4. (key points transparency #1) As I said, all entering students are required to take the placement test, with the following exceptions. Students who do not score at required university skills levels must take the appropriate developmental classes to achieve the required levels of proficiency in English, math, and reading.

5. (1989-90 pt results) These results of our placement testing are based on our 1989-90 testing period since we did not begin using the Asset until after summer registration, 1990 (scores based on College Board Assessment and Placement Test for Community College Students).

(1990-91 placement test results) These results of placement testing are based on our first year of Asset use. One thing I particularly like about the

Asset is that it provides for computer scanning and reporting of the test information. It also provides the ability to gather information that is useful to the institution. For instance, we are using the local option questions to assist our marketing program, asking such questions as "How did you hear about ENMU-Roswell?" and "Which radio/tv station do you listen to most frequently." Having this information will help us to focus our publicity on targeted groups. Also, the Asset allows us to generate reports and information that we have not been able to gather in the past because of time restraints. For example, I can now tell how students from each school in our service district performed on the tests, information which we share with the schools. From this information we have discovered what we suspected but could not substantiate, that students from our local alternative high school, the small rural high schools in the valley, the Job Corps, and GED graduates score considerably lower on the placement test than do high school graduates from the larger schools in our district. We also receive from ACT an Entering Student Descriptive Report, which details the characteristics of an entire group of assessed students each semester.

6. (Developmental Studies follow up transparency) Actually, we began our program of accountability when we changed the policy regarding our developmental classes several years ago. Students enrolled in these classes must take an alternate form of the placement test as their final exam. They must pass the exam in order to pass the class. We felt that class grades, because they allowed for retakes of tests, did not adequately indicate whether or not students had a firm grip on the skills they were originally tested on. If students do not pass the post-test, they must repeat the class. As you can see, the classes have had a fairly high level of success, for a large majority of students pass the post-test after just one semester.

7. (DS tracking results transparency) In addition, we have begun tracking our

developmental studies students through their college coursework. We also receive from ACT a Returning Student Retention Report, a detailed report that provides a look at student outcomes, including success in the classroom and enrollment and re-enrollment patterns. Beginning last semester, we flagged our graduates in our computerized student data base, so we will now be able to identify graduates who have come through the developmental studies program and do some comparisons between them and students who do not require remedial instruction. This tracking of developmental studies students will take place on an annual basis.

8. (key points of assessment transparency #2) As you can see, we have designed our assessment program to be as non-intrusive as possible. Since students were already required to take the placement test and the critical thinking module of the CAAP is given during a class period of College Success, no additional student time is required for initial testing. CAAP, the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency, consists of 5 objective tests--reading, writing, math, critical thinking, and science reasoning. A school may use any combination of modules. CAAP also can provide a writing sample which can be scored locally or by ACT. Although the task force strongly recommended a writing sample as part of the assessment program, costs have prohibited our using one at this time; however, it will more than likely be added sometime in the future. Our school chose to use just four modules for post-testing, since we felt the science reasoning test was very much like a reading test. ACT scores the tests very quickly, and sends us a summary of the data, plus two copies of the students' score report for each test taken. One copy is given to the student and the other copy is kept in the student's permanent record in the Admissions Office, after it has been logged into the computer data bank. The summary provides descriptive statistics and frequency distributions for the institution's total group and general comparative information. The math, writing, and reading modules also

provide subscores to help institutions pinpoint problem areas.

9. (Critical Thinking results) This shows you how our students have done on the critical thinking module so far. Since we have not yet completed our first round of post-testing, we do not have comparative data for that yet. As you can see, our students are a little above the norms for 2-year college students and a little below national norms for all freshmen.

10. (key points of assessment transparency #3) The tests, as I said before, are non-intrusive. The 50-minute module fits in well with class periods for College Success. Post-testing will take approximately 4 hours, and we will have a morning, afternoon, evening, and Saturday testing periods so that all identified students will have the opportunity to participate. Students having completed 45 hours within a 3-year timeframe will be identified, contacted personally, and asked to commit to a testing period. Students will be excused from classes to test, but classes will not have to be dismissed. Student government will assist in gathering incentives for students to take the post-tests, and we have published a statement of students' required participation in the catalog. Post-test scores, like the baseline scores, will be distributed to students. Obviously, this will require a great "marketing" effort by our faculty, staff, and student government to assure adequate participation and optimum effort on the students' part. However, our initial student reaction to the pre-testing, as seen through the administration of the critical thinking test in College Success classes, and post-testing, through our SOCAT exams, has been extremely positive. The students seem interested in measuring themselves and in helping the school to improve as much as possible. Of course, whether that interest translates into great hordes of students showing up to take the post-test or not remains to be seen this coming semester when we do our first round of academic post-testing.

11. (ACT profile transparency, trends) We have also received a profile of

students who took the ACT and requested scores to be sent to our institution. This is helpful additional information in reviewing our total student outcome, as is the retention report, graduation rates, and all of the other outcome measures that we study.

At the completion of their programs, vocational students are post-tested in two says. (licensing results transparency) Most of the graduates of the nursing, EMS, and aviation maintenance technology programs take licensing exams, and these are the results from 1989-90. I do not have all of the results from last year's graduates available yet, but I did just hear that 91% of last year's nursing graduates passed the licensing exam (29 passed out of 32 taking; one did not take).

(SOCAT results transparency) Certificate and degree students in all other vocational programs, with the exception of Petroleum Technology and Industrial Technology for which no standardized test exists, take the Student Occupational Competency Achievement Test (SOCAT) during their final semester. These tests, put out by NOCTI (National Occupational Competency Assessment Institute) also provide national norms. The tests consist of a written exam, which covers factual knowledge, technical information, understanding of principals, and problem solving, and a performance exam, which consists of work assignments designed to sample the manipulative skills required in the occupation. The SOCAT also gives the institution subtest scores which indicate the students' performance on specific subject areas, such as brakes.

12. After all of this testing, how does the institution utilize the abundance of information it receives? SOCAT results are given directly to the division chair and instructors in each of the programs as soon as they are received. Thus, information can be utilized immediately to improve curriculum if necessary for the next group to be tested. This information, as well as the academic outcomes

information, will be shared on an annual basis with the deans, division chairs, the Instructional Council, and the Administrative Council to utilize as they work on program review, new programs, additions to the curriculum, and overall institutional evaluation.

13. (advantages of assessment program transparency) One way to measure an institution's effectiveness is by comparing its outcomes with other similar institutions. All of these standardized instruments allow for comparison with national norms. (b) Students receive individual results, which they can use in their job searches and on their resumes. It also gives them a sense of ownership in the program and shows them how they stack up against other students. (c) Testing is non-intrusive and does not disrupt regular class schedules. (d) Data is scored and results generated by outside agencies, which provides students, and the institution, with a validation from outside sources of their competencies. (e). The institution receives support from testing professionals. This is especially important in our school, where we do not have a research officer or other person identified to input and analyze data. The reports generated by ACT and the SOCAT are easily transferred into institutional reports to share with the university community and other agencies. Also, and this is extremely important, the people from both of these agencies are very helpful. Whenever I have a question, I just pick up the phone and call Roy Henderson at ACT, and if he doesn't know the answer, he at least points me to someone who does. Also, ACT sponsors a variety of workshops and seminars to discuss these very ideas and others, which lets people like us meet to learn more about assessment and other current issues, to express our own concerns, and to exchange information, ideas, and techniques.

14. Our assessment program is well off the ground, but it is still in its infancy. Once we have completed our first round of post-testing, we will have a

much better feel for its strengths and weaknesses. We have recently added to our total outcome assessment plan placement information and employer satisfaction information. We all believe that our institutions and programs are doing a good job, and I would like to say that assessment is just a passing fad; however, that is not the case (St. Peter transparency). I'm afraid it's with us to the end, and that's good. The technology of the next century is going to demand higher and higher skills of our students, and we must be sure that they possess those skills when they leave our doors. Student success is what we're all after, and I would like to close with this National Student's Prayer, by Philip M. Summers, President of Vincennes University:

15. Thank you for your attention. If you have any questions, I would be happy to address them at this time.

NATIONAL STUDENT'S PRAYER

Philip M. Summers
President
Vincennes University

Heavenly Father, look down with favor on the humble students who travel the campuses of this nation asking their parents for money, carrying armloads of occasionally-used textbooks, and seeking in-depth educational inspiration and insight at late-night dances.

We pray that they find housing accommodations that will include space for their stereos and televisions and other necessities of life, that their cars are not too much newer or more costly than the faculty's, and that they understand that they should not write checks for amounts greater than they have in their bank accounts.

Lead them to good study habits, and may they learn that daytime is for activity and nighttime is for sleep....and not the reverse.

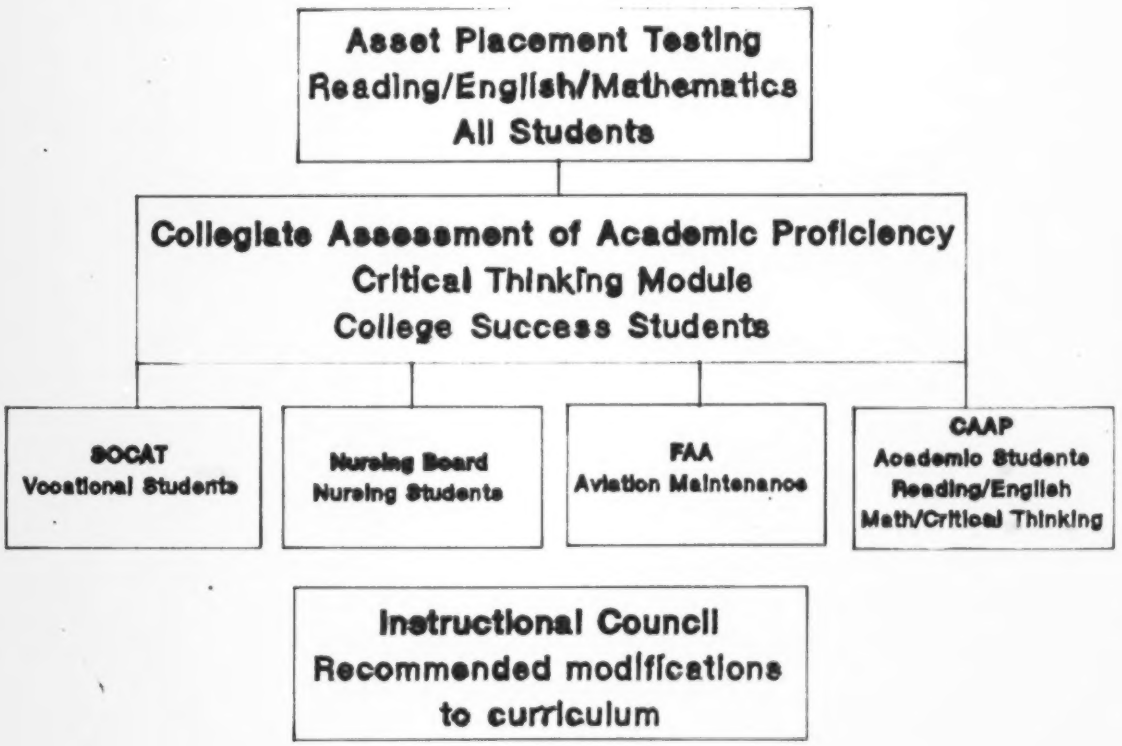
Give them strength to attend class regularly and be prepared for tests, and may they be creative with their reasons when this cannot be done.

Protect the female students from pleas of eternal love from male students. Lead them not into temptation, for they know not what they do.

Save the male students from making pleas of eternal love which come not from the heart, but from other parts of the anatomy; and please do not forgive them their trespasses, for they know exactly what they do!

And when they graduate, grant them the favor of finding employment or transfer to another college, and may they remember their Alma Mater as a great place that helped them in their lifes.

This we ask in the name of students who like the cafeteria food, commuters who can find parking spaces, and athletes who do go to class, and all the dedicated, hard-working, and understanding deans, faculty and professional staff who continue to go the extra mile to help students achieve success.


Asset Placement Testing
Reading/English/Mathematics
All Students
Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency
Critical Thinking Module
College Success Students
SOCAT
Vocational Students
Nursing Board
Nursing Students
FAA
Aviation Maintenance
CAAP
Academic Students
Reading/English
Math/Critical Thinking
Instructional Council
Recommended modifications
to curriculum

Key Points of Assessment Program

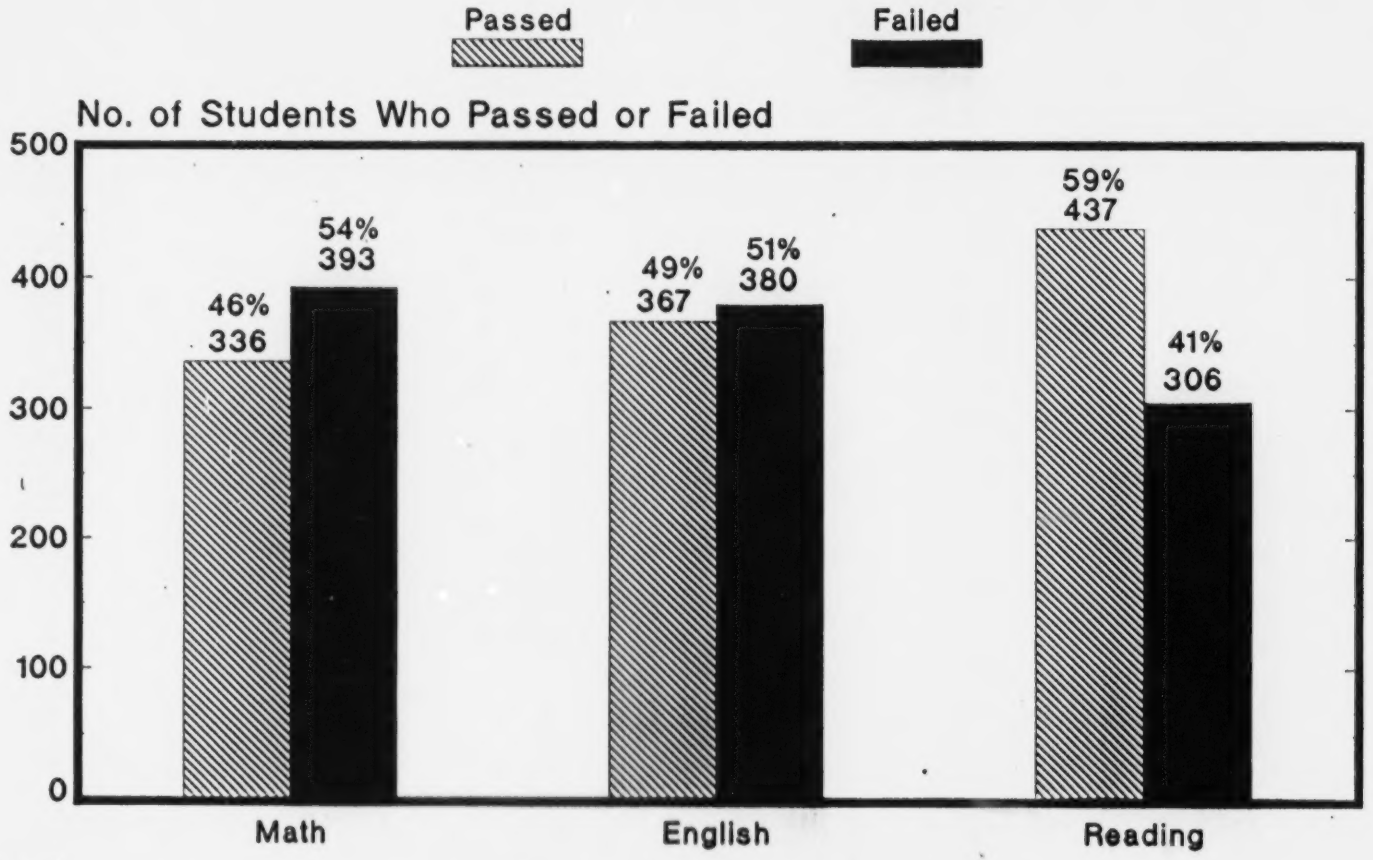
All entering students are required to take placement tests with the following exceptions:

1. Students who have already earned a minimum of 30 hours of college credit, which must include English and mathematics.

2. Students with fewer than 30 hours of college credit who transfer with a passing grade in freshman level courses in English and mathematics are exempt from those portions of the test, but are still required to take the reading portion of the test.

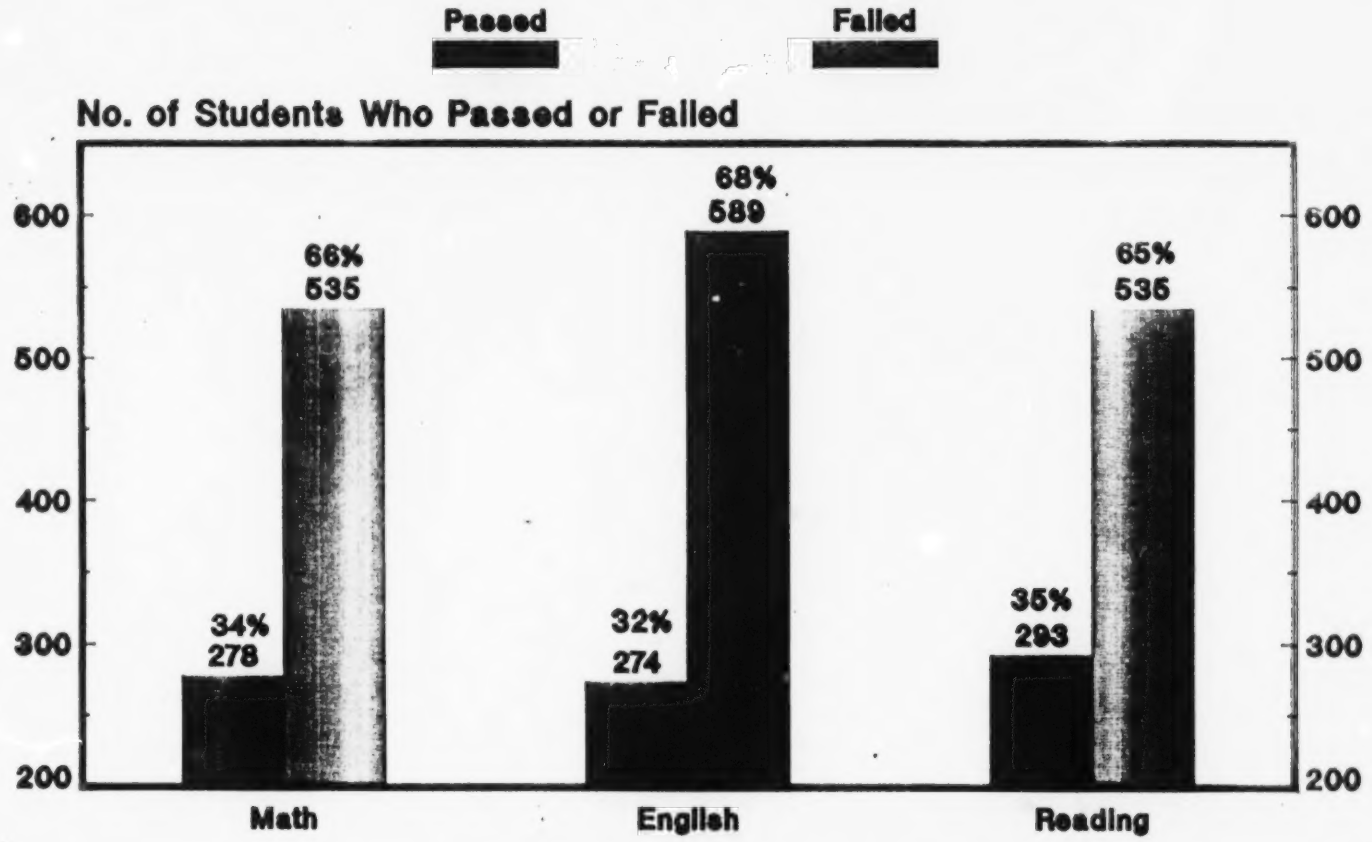
3. Part-time, non-degree students unless they plan to enroll in English and/or mathematics.

Eastern New Mexico University–Roswell
1989–90 Placement Test Results



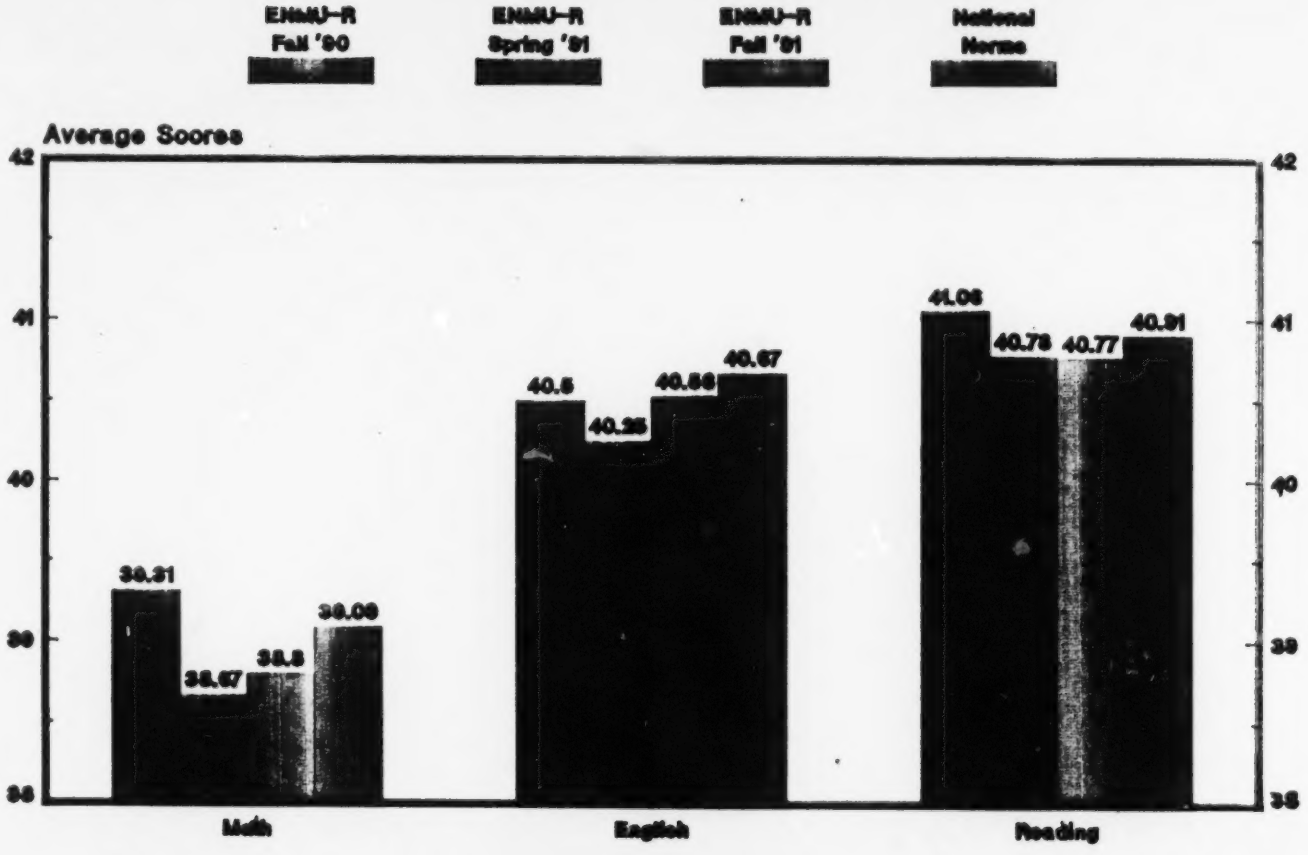
Eastern New Mexico University – Roswell

1990–1991 Asset Placement Test Results

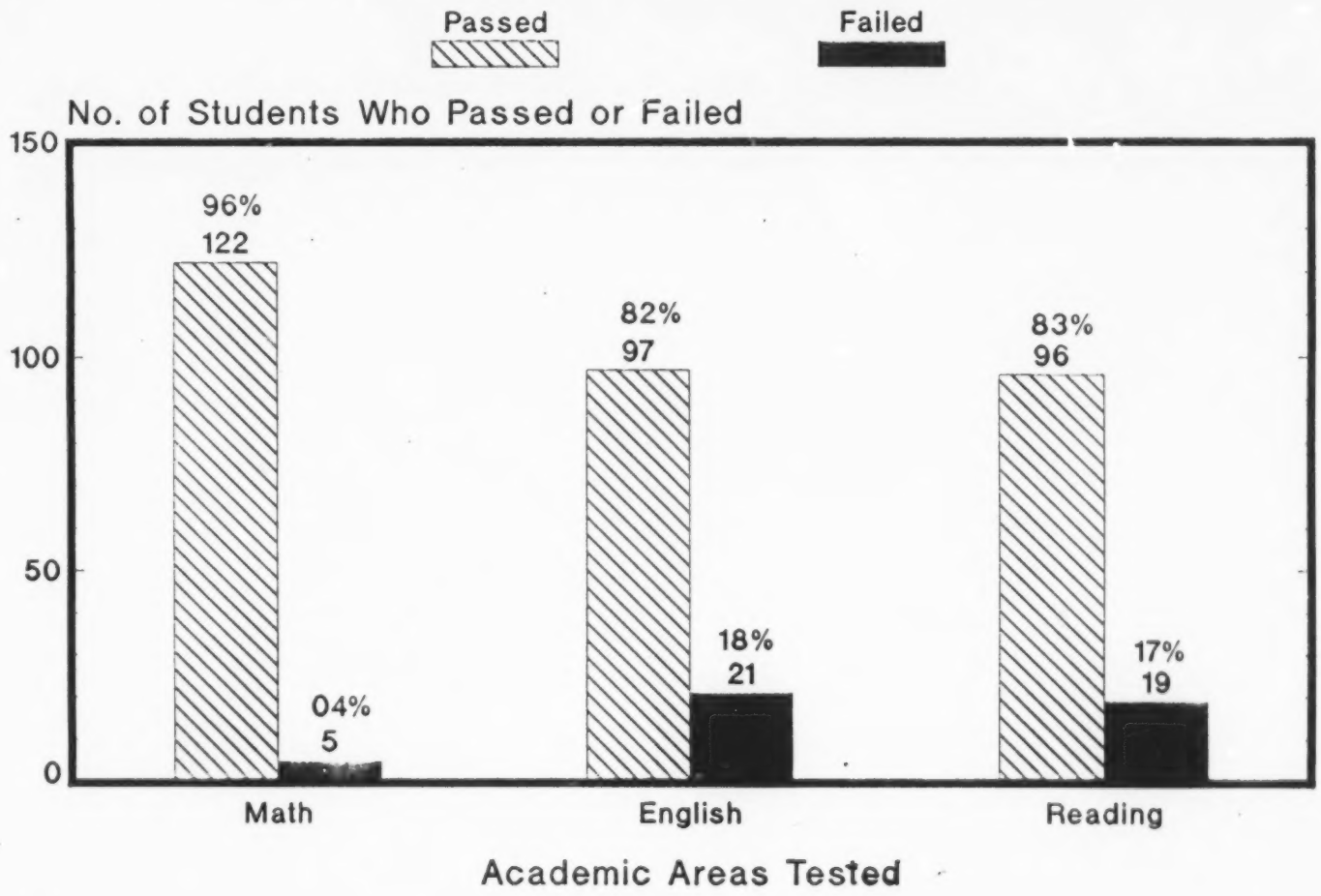


Eastern New Mexico University - Roswell

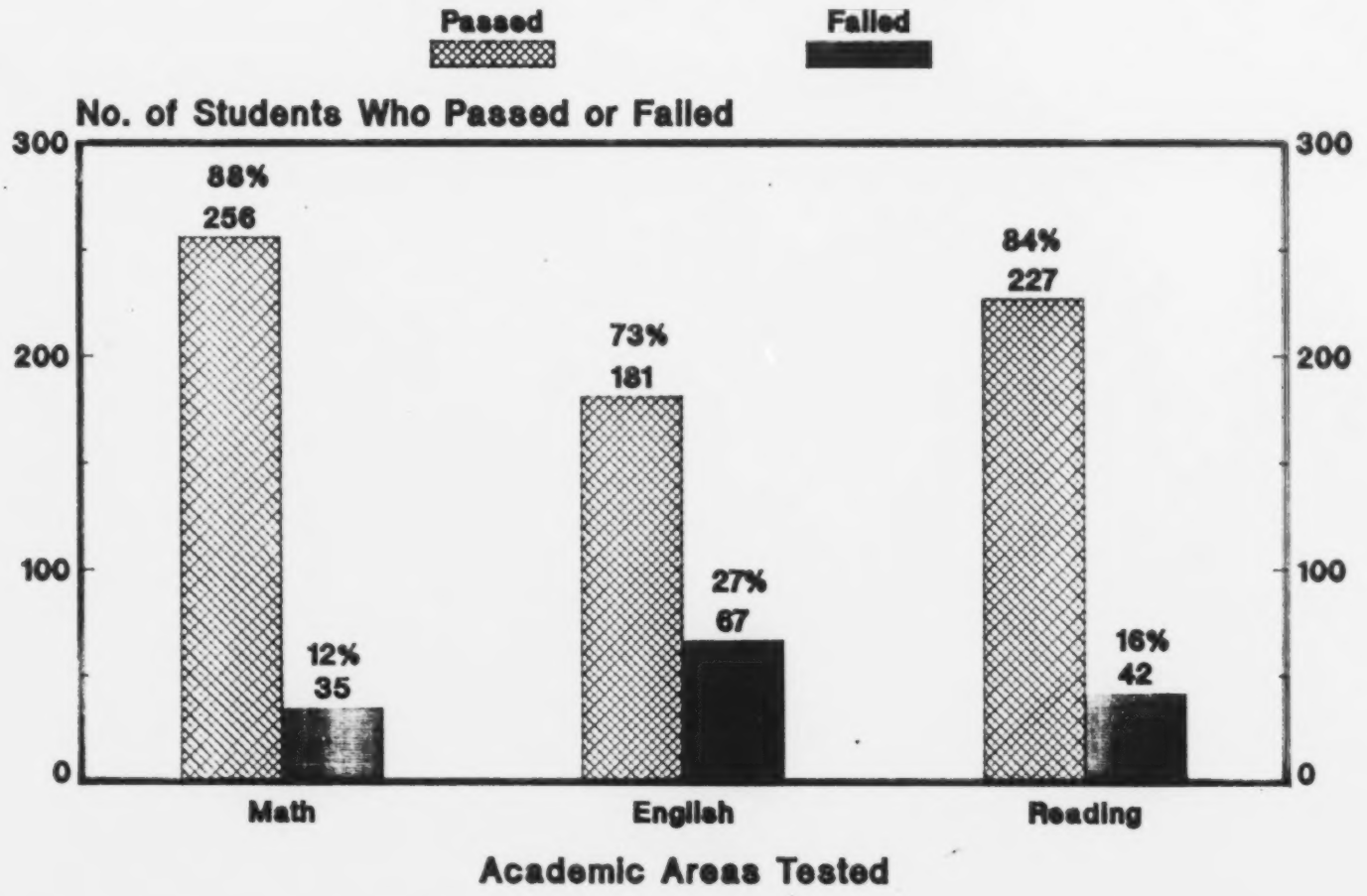
1990-1991 Asset Placement Test Average Scores



Eastern New Mexico University–Roswell
1989–90 Developmental Studies Class Results

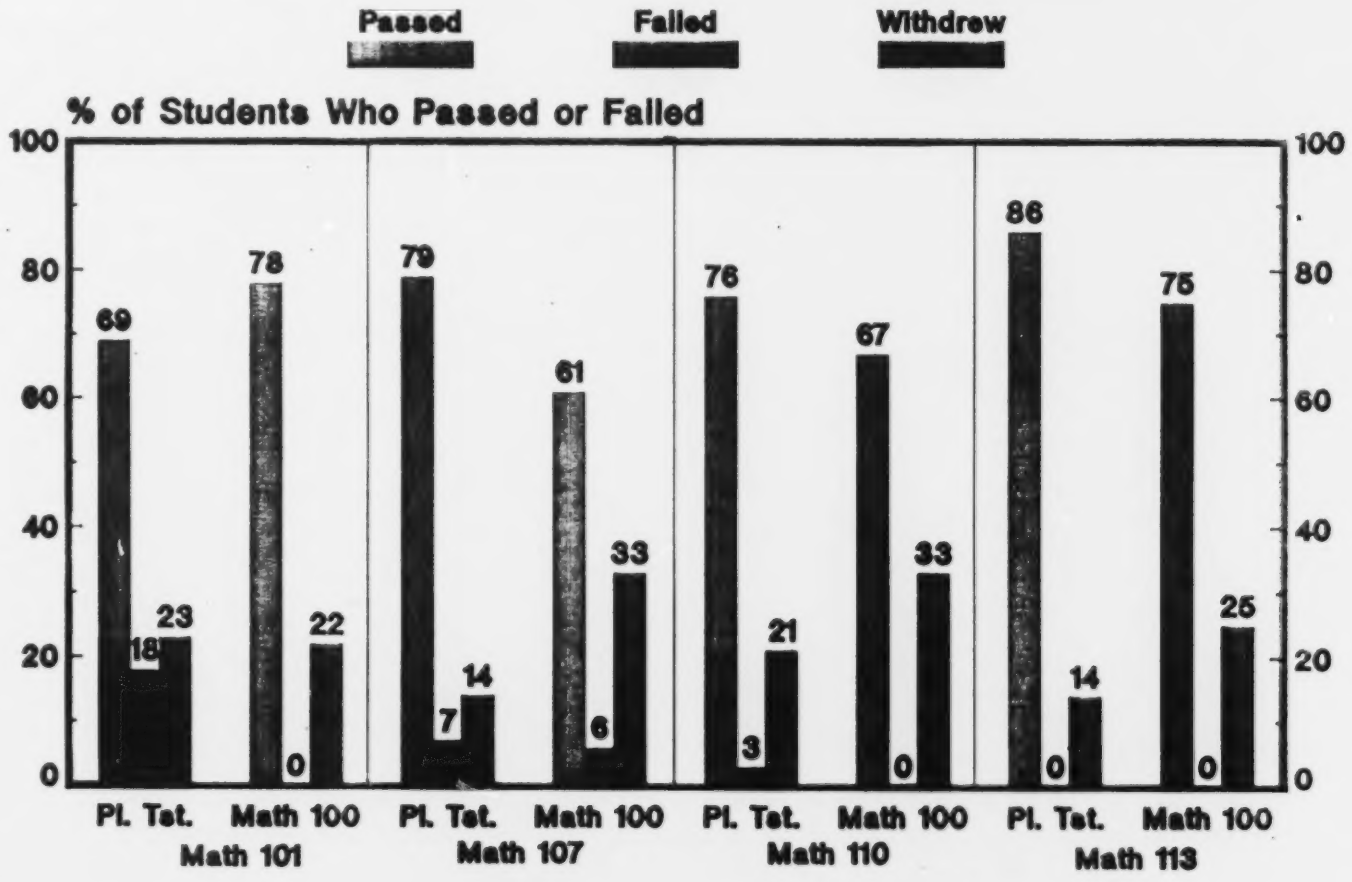


Eastern New Mexico University – Roswell
1990–1991 Developmental Studies Class Results



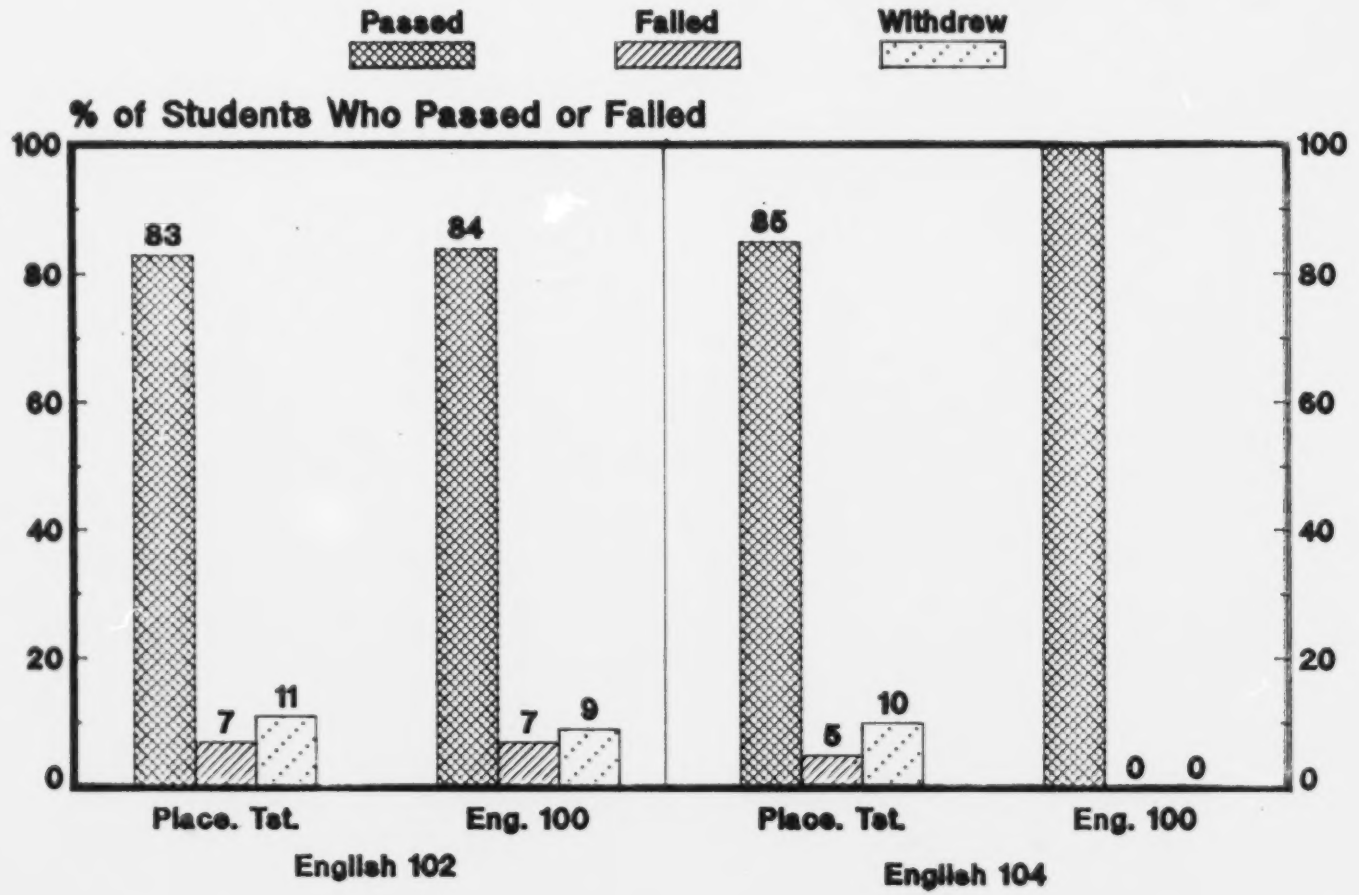
Eastern New Mexico University – Roswell

Developmental Studies Followup Results



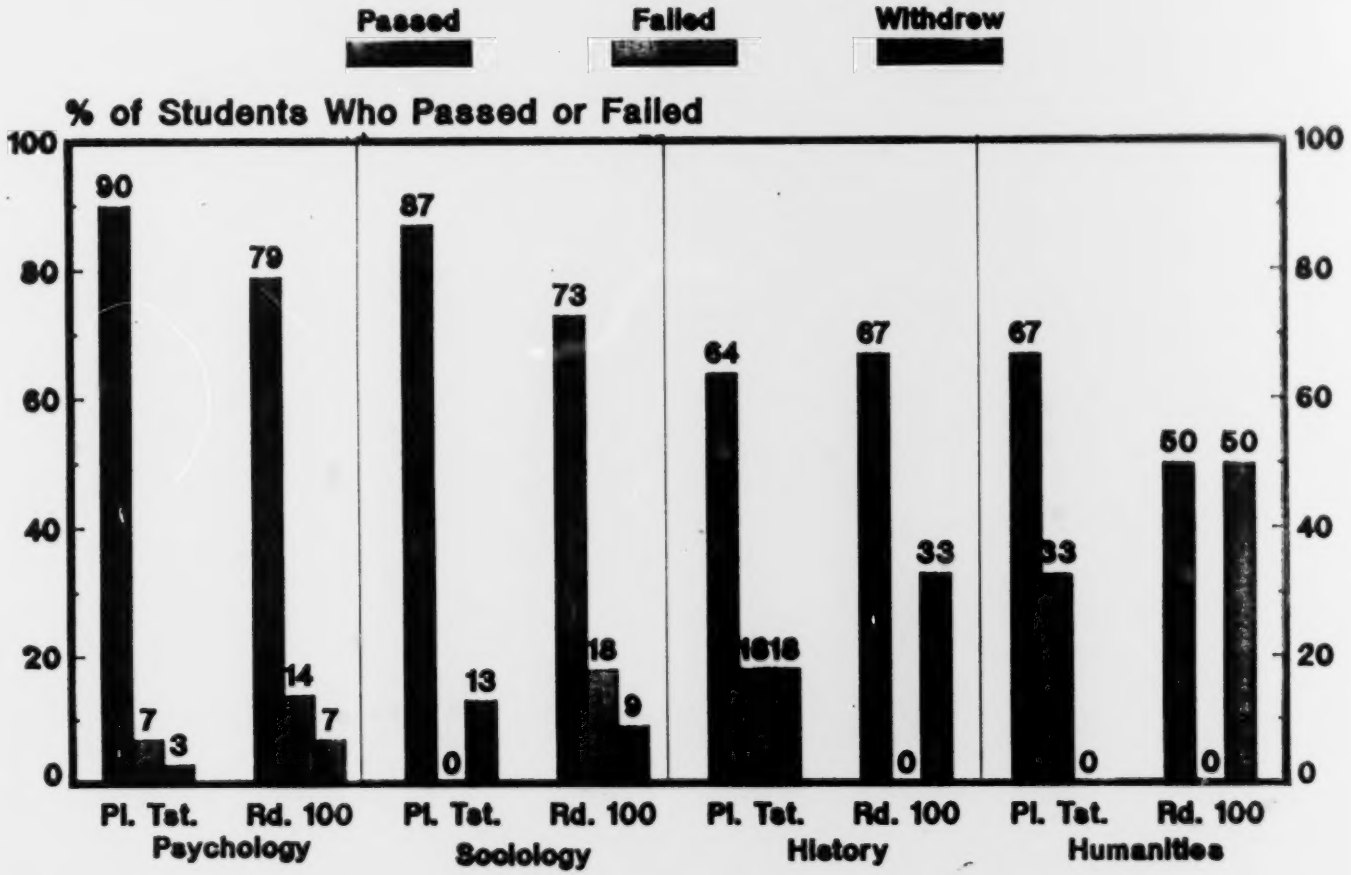
Eastern New Mexico University – Roswell

Developmental Studies Followup Results

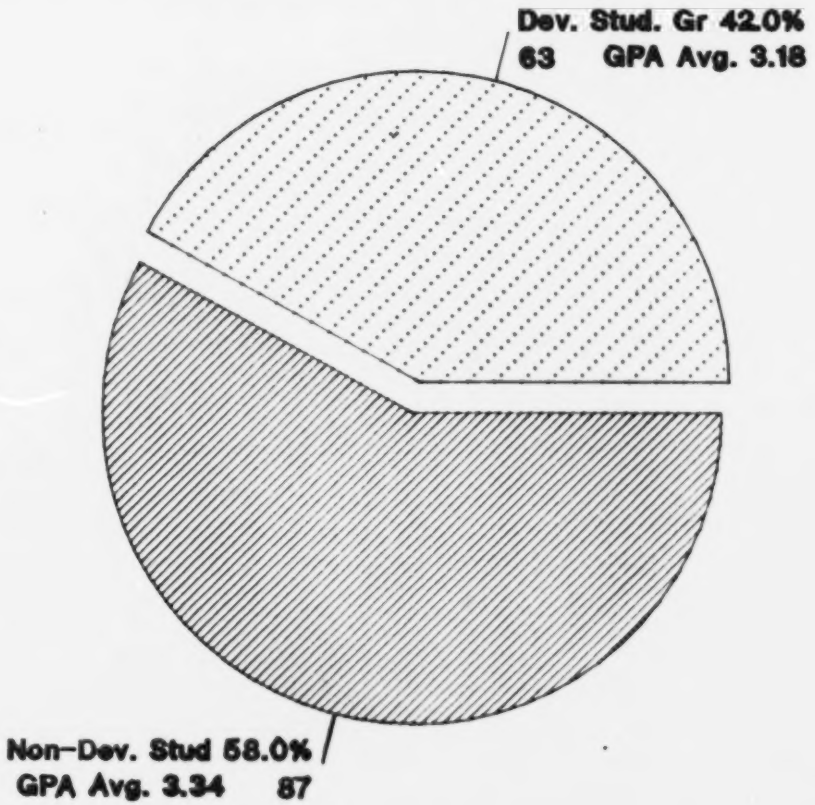


Eastern New Mexico University – Roswell

Developmental Studies Followup Results



Eastern New Mexico University - Roswell
1990 Developmental Studies Followup Results



GPA Average For All 1990 Graduates = 3.27

Key Points of Assessment Program

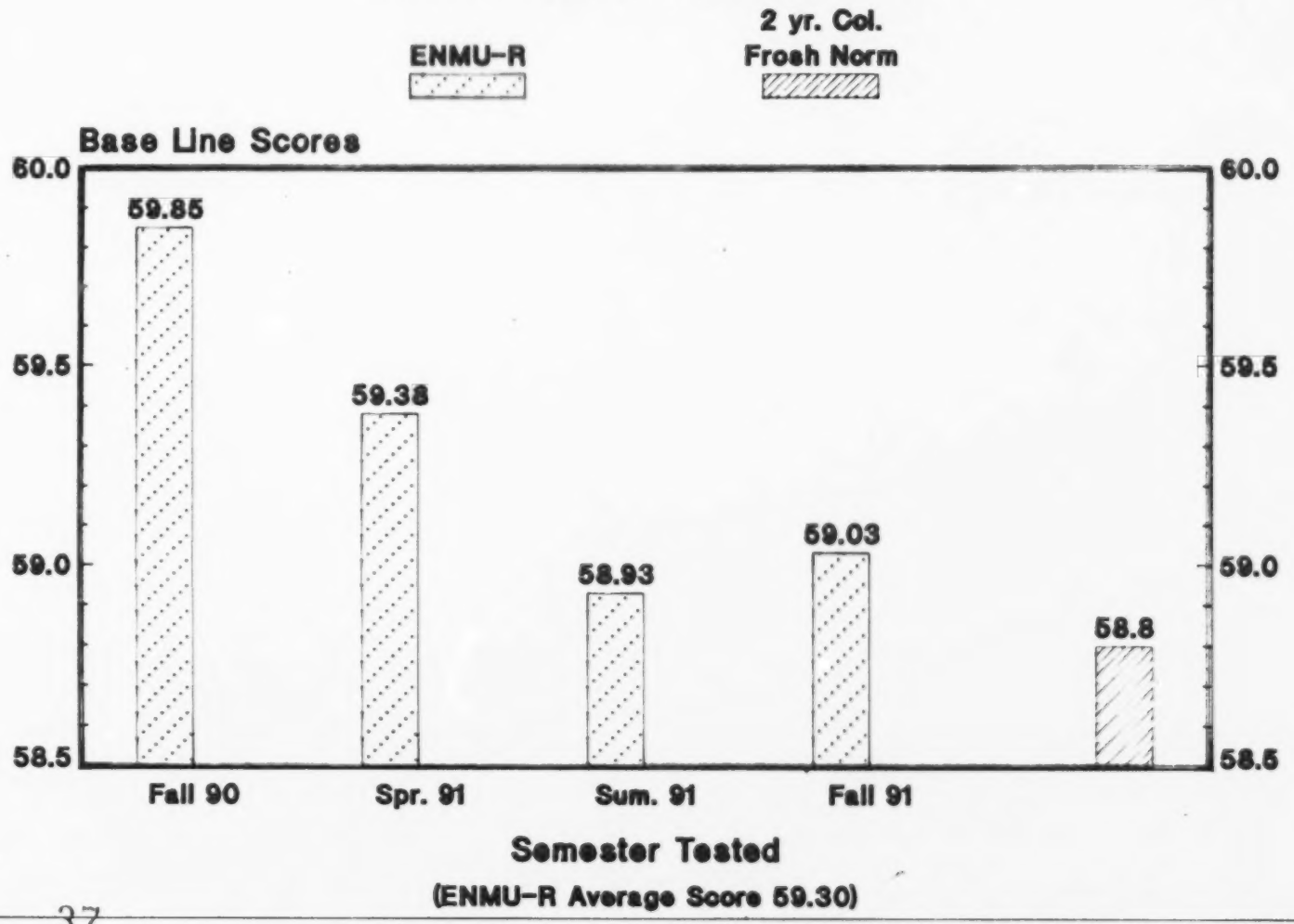
Students are given placement tests in reading, English and mathematics using ASSET.

Students in College Success (required course for most entering students) are given the Critical Thinking module of the CAAP.

The ASSET and CAAP Critical Thinking scores are used as baseline measurements. These students are tracked. After two years, academic students from this group who have a minimum of 45 credit hours are required to take the CAAP reading, English, mathematics, and critical thinking modules to obtain a post-test score.

Eastern New Mexico University – Roswell

CAAP Critical Thinking Test



Key Points of Assessment Program

Scores from baseline and post-test are correlated to obtain a value-added score. Both ASSET and CAAP are ACT instruments which can be correlated.

Both baseline and post-test are designed to be as non-intrusive as possible. Students can select time to be tested. Norming results are available for both instruments.

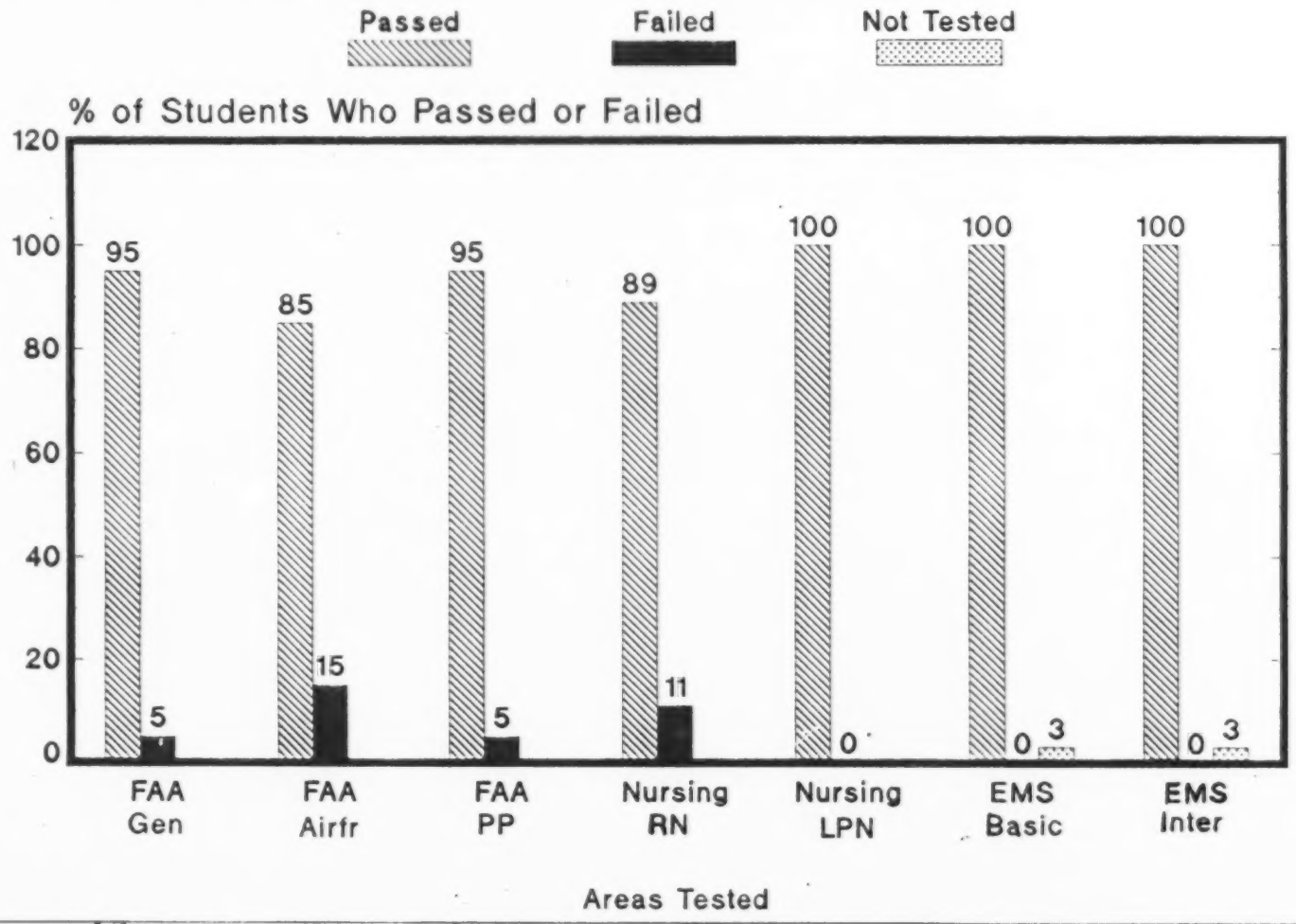
Vocational students are tested via SOCAT to obtain competencies as compared to other students, state and national norms.

Results of tests provide information for program strengths and weaknesses. Instructional Council provides the vehicle for modifying program to address weaknesses.

College Freshman Trends: Scores and Grades

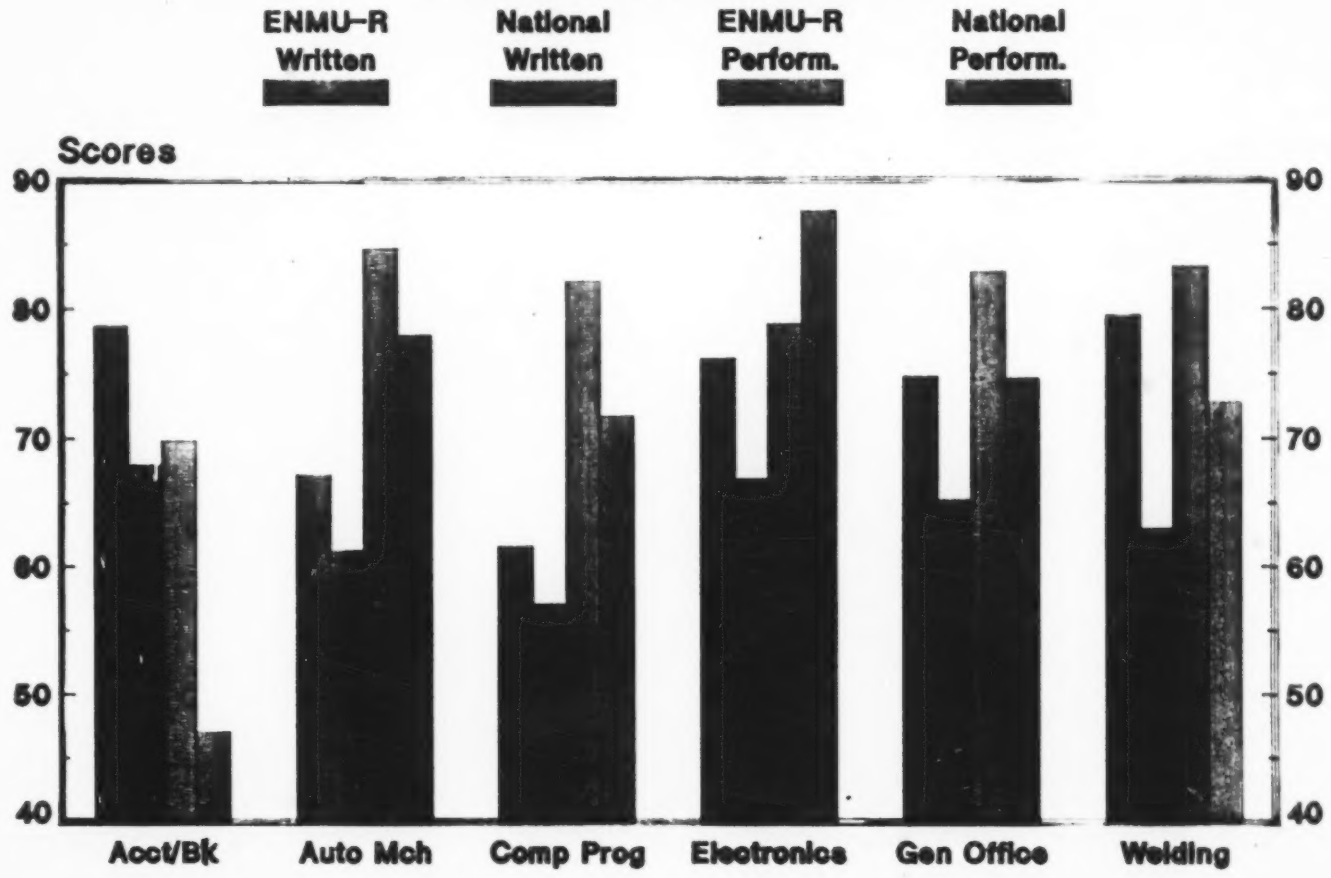
	ENMU-R Freshman Class					89-90 Norms	
	86-87 AVG	87-88 AVG	88-89 AVG	89-90 AVG	90-91 AVG	National AVG	2-yr AVG
ACT Standard Score							
English	18.4			19.9	18.0	21.6	18.7
Mathematics	16.3			17.7	16.9	20.4	17.3
Composite	18.2			18.6	18.0	21.2	18.3
High School Grades							
English	2.48			2.71	2.81	3.02	2.74
Mathematics	2.62			2.06	2.47	2.75	2.45
Social Studies	2.61			2.63	2.88	3.12	2.81
Natural Sciences	2.63			2.60	2.61	2.92	2.62
Average of Grades (HSA)	2.61			2.50	2.68	2.95	2.66

Eastern New Mexico University–Roswell
1989–90 State/Federal Licensing Exam Results



Eastern New Mexico University - Roswell

1989-91 SOCAT Results



Advantages of Assessment Program

1. Standardized instruments provide comparisons to other institutions.

2. Students receive individual results.

3. Testing is designed to be non-intrusive in terms of time and scheduling.

4. Data is scored and results generated by outside agency.

5. Institution receives support from testing professionals.

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges

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